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Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4414th meeting

Tuesday, 13 November 2001, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Knight	(Jamaica)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Rahman
	China	Mr. Tang Jiaxuan
	Colombia	Mr. Fernández de Soto
	France	Mr. Védrine
	Ireland	Mr. Cowen
	Mali	Mr. Sidibe
	Mauritius	Mr. Gayan
	Norway	Mr. Petersen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Jayakumar
	Tunisia	Mr. Mejdoub
	Ukraine	Mr. Zlenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Straw
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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01-63398 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Cappagli (Argentina), Mr. Dauth (Australia), Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium), Mr. Heinbecker (Canada), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Schumacher (Germany), Mr. Sharma (India), Mr. Widodo (Indonesia), Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Vento (Italy), Mr. Motomura (Japan), Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan), Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia), Mr. Navarrete (Mexico), Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands), Mr. Goff (New Zealand), Mr. Sattar Pakistan), Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea), Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) and Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provision rules of procedure to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Brahimi to take a seat at the Council table.

I shall now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Secretary-General: Before I proceed, I would also like to recognize among us the presence of President Rau of Germany and his wife in the Chamber. I think it is important that they join us for this discussion.

I believe that this open meeting of the Security Council could not be more timely — and not just because of the dramatic events on the ground of the last twenty-four hours. Afghanistan presents the United Nations with one of its greatest challenges. That challenge is now perhaps at its most urgent stage. The international community must be ready to respond.

In particular, the sustained engagement of the Security Council will be needed if we are to help set Afghanistan on the path to a stable and lasting peace and address the dire humanitarian needs of the Afghan people.

The United Nations has a long history of involvement in addressing the plight of the Afghan people. The terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September and the consequent military action in Afghanistan have created a new environment that presents daunting challenges to the international community, but also new opportunities.

First and foremost, we must do all we can to help meet the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people, who have suffered from decades of man-made, as well as natural, disasters in the shape of conflict, repression, drought and famine. Winter is closing in, and we must feed and shelter as many of the vulnerable and suffering as possible. Next, the rapid march of events on the ground requires that we focus on the challenge we will face in a post-Taliban period. This means taking urgent action so as to avoid a political and security vacuum.

It means giving priority to the actions the international community needs to take to help ensure a climate of stability that can create the conditions for a lasting peace.

As the Council knows, Lakhdar Brahimi has just returned from Pakistan, Iran and also Saudi Arabia. I am confident that with your active support,

Mr. Brahimi will be able to make progress in the intensive efforts in which he is engaged to facilitate transitional arrangements that will lay the foundations for a peaceful and stable Afghan future.

If all the Afghan parties — as well as the neighbours and the wider international community — give their full support, there is now a real opportunity to create the sort of broad-based, fully representative Government which the United Nations has long been trying to help the Afghan people achieve. A stable Afghanistan, living in peace, carrying out its international obligations and posing no threat to any of its neighbours, must be our common objective. To achieve it, any arrangement arrived at must reflect the will, the needs and the interests of the Afghan people and enjoy their full support.

This requires the end of interference in Afghanistan's affairs by neighbouring countries. Unless this happens — on the level of reality rather than just rhetoric — there can be little hope of lasting stability in Afghanistan.

Before closing, I wish to draw the Council's attention to the immediate needs of the more than six million people inside Afghanistan affected by the conflict and natural disaster.

Over the past two weeks, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations have geared up cross-border delivery and distribution of food and non-food assistance. For the first time since 11 September, we have been able to reach or even exceed our weekly targets of food supplies. I commend the extraordinary efforts of our colleagues on the ground, in particular the hundreds of Afghans who are working inside Afghanistan with great dedication under the most difficult circumstances.

But many areas still remain inaccessible, making distribution difficult, in particular in the North. These areas are also among the most vulnerable. If we want to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in the coming months, we must make every effort to overcome the logistical challenges in, for example, reaching areas cut off by snow.

Let us not forget that our assistance efforts must be based on one principle only: to help those most in need. No less daunting are the constraints imposed by insecurity.

Irrespective of military or political developments, we will have to gain the consent and cooperation of all parties on the ground to reach people in need. We shall have to devise innovative approaches for interim security measures until a sustained political process is in place.

The Afghan population look to the international community and the Security Council to create the conditions in which they can finally enjoy a Government which is fully representative, protects their human rights and ensures friendly relations with their neighbours. We owe it to them, and let us not let them down.

The President: I now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Mr. Brahimi: I am deeply grateful to the Secretary-General for the opportunity to work again on Afghanistan. The challenge, as all members are aware, is enormous, but I will do my utmost to support the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the decisions made by the States Members of the United Nations in general and by the members of this body in particular.

The 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States of America reminded the world of the reality that a collapsed and destitute State provides fertile ground for armed groups and individuals to plan and prepare unspeakable acts of terror at home and abroad. The united international reaction to those attacks has, as a result, transformed the conditions for international action in Afghanistan.

Before embarking on my mission to the region on 26 October, I had the opportunity to listen to the views of the members of the Security Council on two occasions. While in Pakistan and Iran, I spoke with a wide range of Afghan groups and individuals, including women and students, as well as people still living inside Afghanistan. These conversations reconfirmed the urgency of finding a viable and durable solution to the crisis. Afghans representing diverse walks of life and shades of opinion repeatedly emphasized a common theme. They categorically condemned the terrorist attacks on the United States and the fact that Afghan territory has been used as a staging ground for terrorist activity. At the same time, they understandably expressed deep concern about the impact of the military operations on ordinary Afghan men, women and children.

They are united in the belief that only a legitimate Afghan Government, representing the aspirations and interests of all the people of Afghanistan, can muster sufficient resolve and legitimacy to free Afghanistan from the grip of international terrorist groups. Realizing the challenge involved in the establishment of such a legitimate authority, all the Afghans whom we met welcomed the current global focus on Afghanistan and hoped that the international community would remain engaged in finding a lasting solution to their crisis.

Iran and Pakistan have a special role in Afghanistan. Geography, history, language and religion make for deep connections between each of those two countries and Afghanistan. They also have legitimate interests in the emergence of a stable Afghanistan and, up until now, they have had ties with particular movements in the country. The Governments of Iran and Pakistan expressed a clear commitment to finding a political solution that would preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and enable Afghans to choose a broad-based Government that would enjoy domestic and international legitimacy. The Presidents of the two countries, General Pervez Musharraf and Mr. Mohammad Khatami, assured me in no uncertain terms that, because the see the establishment of a stable and representative Government accountable to all Afghans to be in their own national interests, they would like the United Nations to play a pivotal role in the process of finding a political solution. The two Presidents maintained that it was not a good idea for any outsiders to impose a solution on the people of Afghanistan and they shared the view that the international community should help the Afghans to find that political solution on their own because only such a home-grown solution would be credible, legitimate and sustainable.

On terrorism, both Presidents emphasized the need to find political solutions that would prevent Afghanistan from being used again as a breeding and staging ground for acts of terror. They expressed regret that Afghanistan had been used far too often by people who have no interest in the well-being of the Afghan nation.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General chaired a meeting of the "six plus two" group at the level of Foreign Minister. The meeting confirmed agreement that there should be established in Afghanistan a broad-based, multi-ethnic, politically balanced, freely chosen Afghan administration representative of Afghan aspirations and at peace with its neighbours. Given the rapidly changing conditions on the ground, the group stressed the need for speed.

Consensus between Afghanistan's neighbours is essential. Without it, Afghans themselves will find it extremely difficult to achieve a durable solution free from undue interference in their own affairs. Of course, Afghanistan's neighbours alone cannot help the Afghans to achieve national reconciliation and to rebuild their country. Here, the international community at large will need to make a massive commitment, politically and financially, to the long-term stability of Afghanistan. It is therefore necessary to strengthen other mechanisms for multilateral cooperation and coordination in Afghanistan. At this juncture, serious consideration should be given to ways to better utilize a rich pool of skilled Afghans in the planning and implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction projects.

With respect to Afghanistan, the United Nations has, over the years, convened several groups of interested countries in addition to the "six plus two" group, such as the Group of 21, which is comprised of a broader group of interested countries that also have either influence or interests, or both, or that have been directly or indirectly affected by the Afghan crisis and could, either directly or indirectly, help contribute to the resolution of Afghanistan's problems. I share the view of those of its members that believe that the Group of 21 should be reactivated and reinvigorated, and we have suggested that it reconvene on Friday.

The United Nations also participates in the Afghanistan Support Group convened by donor countries, the Geneva Initiative in support of peace efforts seeking to legitimize a transition through a *Loya Jirgah*, and other initiatives. It is essential that all these groups and any other groups that Member States may wish to form on their own develop a common constructive position with regard to Afghanistan's political future. The Security Council will naturally be at the forefront of forging this international consensus and resolve, not only through the resolutions it adopts, but, even more importantly, by the actions its members will take.

Things are changing fast on the ground, as we have seen over the past few days, especially last night and this morning, with the Northern Alliance

expanding its control over territory and entering Kabul. The Secretary-General has this morning asked me to relay his instruction to Francesc Vendrell, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, to go to Kabul immediately security conditions permit, and I have done so. The Secretary-General has also asked that assessments by made as soon as possible to allow the return of our international staff to Afghanistan as soon as possible. Such an assessment was done earlier for Faizabad and United Nations personnel are expected back there in a day or two.

For the longer term, however, the fundamentals will not change and the strategic objective of our common efforts will remain the same. It consists of the need to help the people of Afghanistan establish a responsible, representative, accountable and stable Government which enjoys internal and external legitimacy; is committed to respecting and promoting the rights of all its men, women and children; enjoys peaceful and friendly relations with all its neighbours; and is able to ensure that Afghanistan will never again be used as a breeding and staging ground for terrorists or drug-traffickers.

There is agreement among Afghan parties, as well as at the level of the international community, on the goal of creating a broad-based Government that would be representative of all groups in the country, accountable to its citizens and friendly to its neighbours, and would enjoy internal and external legitimacy. The difficulty is in securing agreement among interested parties to design a series of concrete steps to reach that goal. The bitter experience of the last 10 years shows that the solution must be carefully put together and home-grown so that it enjoys the support of all internal and external players and so that no spoilers from either inside or outside will disrupt its implementation.

Afghans themselves have been talking widely about how to achieve these objectives. The discussions in Rome between the former King of Afghanistan and the representatives of the United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, commonly known as the Northern Alliance, have raised these discussions to a new level. Discussions are also taking place in many other forums both inside and outside Afghanistan, including within the Cyprus process and the Peshawar Convention. In these forums, Afghans have been proposing a series of steps and mechanisms to establish a transitional administration that would pave the way for a stable Government.

It is time to bring these existing initiatives into a common framework and to broaden the process in a manner that would pave the way for a stable Government. A common theme of these proposals has been the emphasis on the convening role of the United Nations in order to bring the parties together. The United Nations has been trying to help build a national consensus for many years, but as was agreed yesterday at the ministerial meeting of the "six plus two" group, time is now of the essence. It is essential and urgent that the efforts of the various Afghan groups be brought together into a single process.

Consequently, the Secretary-General thinks that instead of continuing with shuttle diplomacy, going from one group to another in the various capitals, the need for nimbleness in finding a political solution now requires that the Northern Alliance and the representatives of the existing initiatives meet with the United Nations as early as humanly possible so that a common framework can be created and enlarged to allow for fair representation for all Afghan communities. This suggestion, made yesterday by the Secretary-General, was favourably received by the "six plus two" Ministers. I hope that those members of the Council who are in a position to do so will encourage the leaders of the Northern Alliance, the Rome and Cyprus processes and the Peshawar Convention to meet with us at a convenient venue as soon as possible.

Based on the ideas discussed widely by Afghans themselves within these various processes and other forums, the approach might follow this sequence:

First, the United Nations would convene a meeting, at a venue to be determined, of representatives of the Northern Alliance and existing processes — later complemented by representatives of other groups to ensure fair representation for all parts of Afghan society — to agree on a framework for the process of political transition.

Secondly, the meeting would suggest concrete steps for the convening of a provisional council, which would be composed of a fairly large and representative group of Afghans drawn from all ethnic and regional communities. The provisional council would be chaired by an individual recognized as a symbol of national unity, around whom all ethnic, religious and regional groups could rally, and could include several deputy

chairmen who would conduct its day-to-day proceedings. The credibility and legitimacy of the provisional council would be enhanced if particular attention were to be given to the participation of individuals and groups, including women, who have not been engaged in armed conflict.

Thirdly, the provisional council would propose the composition of a transitional administration and a programme of action for the period of political transition, to last no more than two years, as well as arrangements for security.

Fourthly, an emergency *Loya Jirgah* would then be convened to approve the transitional administration, its programme of action and its proposals for security, as well as to authorize the transitional administration to prepare a constitution.

Fifthly, the transitional phase would result in the convening of a second *Loya Jirgah*, which would approve the constitution and create the Government of Afghanistan.

The challenge in Afghanistan will be the creation of good Government. That in turn will depend on the formulation of clear and fair rules of the game, and adherence to those rules by all. For the Government to be sustainable, Afghans themselves must be engaged in the creation of institutions and good governance. Working with United Nations agencies and international and local non-governmental organizations has given many Afghans wide experience in managing accountable organizations. There is also significant capacity among a new generation of Afghans in the diaspora, particularly in Iran and Pakistan. It is these Afghans who can help constitute a transitional administration which would be far more credible, acceptable and legitimate in the eyes of the country's population than a transitional administration run by the United Nations or another constellation of foreigners. Parachuting a large number of international experts into Afghanistan could overwhelm the nascent transitional administration and interfere with the building of local capacity.

However, without genuine and lasting security, nothing will be possible, let alone the establishment of a new Government. Even in a political settlement among Afghans, parties cannot ensure security on their own. The pervasive presence of non-Afghan armed and terrorist groups with no interest in a lasting peace will necessitate the introduction of a robust security force, able to deter and, if possible, defeat challenges to its authority. There are three options for such a force, presented here in the order of desirability: first, an all-Afghan security force; secondly, a multinational force; and thirdly, a United Nations peacekeeping force. The preferred option is an all-Afghan force, provided it can be fielded in a speedy, robust and credible manner.

Work to establish such an all-Afghan force should start as early as possible. However, it is unlikely that it can be constituted in the near term, which suggests that serious consideration will need to be given to the deployment of a national security presence. Provided that it includes adequately trained and armed units ready to defend themselves and their mandate, such a presence could ensure security in the major city and preserve the political space in which negotiations towards the resolution of the many problems ahead could proceed.

An armed United Nations peacekeeping force is not recommended. The Secretary-General would require several months to obtain from Member States sufficient numbers of troops to pose a credible military deterrent and, subsequently, to deploy them. Furthermore, United Nations peacekeepers have proved most successful when deployed to implement an existing political settlement among willing parties, not to serve as a substitute for one. Any security force established in the absence of a credible ceasefire agreement or political settlement, whether constituted by Afghans, international personnel or both, could quickly find itself in the role of combatant. That is not a role for Blue Helmets.

The need for such security arrangements is even more urgent for Kabul. The control of the capital of the country has immense symbolic value. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992, the Islamic resistance groups could not reach agreement about the nature of political authority, and engaged in a devastating and long-drawn-out civil war which destroyed the city. Many Afghans have expressed determination to avoid another round of such fighting, and hence are calling for Kabul to be demilitarized and not to be controlled by a single party. Without a credible security arrangement, however, no political settlement can be implemented.

Let me say something, too, about the all-important humanitarian action, and expand on what the Secretary-General has already said. It must be

recognized that, whatever the political and security scenario, a grave humanitarian crisis looms and the suffering of the civilian population is of an immense magnitude. We have already informed the Council about the 6 million people at risk and about our anticipated difficulties in providing food, clothing, clean water, non-food items and shelter against the winter, which has already arrived in many parts of Afghanistan.

Our challenge is clear: we must ship to the country, and distribute, at least 52,000 tonnes of food per month over the next few months. We must provide or support health care for 7.5 million people and shelter for over 1 million internally displaced persons throughout the country, and attempt to provide assistance and protection for those at risk from conflict or persecution, including those who become refugees. We must advocate adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties. Bearing all of that in mind, the United Nations is engaged in an extremely detailed operational coordination exercise to identify and concentrate on the most vulnerable populations.

During the first week of November, the United Nations and its partners substantially improved the delivery of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The World Food Programme and its partners succeeded in distributing over 12,000 tonnes of food per day. Contracts have been signed with non-governmental organization partners that will allow us to concentrate on the highest priority cases of about 3.5 million people, who must be served before the depths of winter. We have also succeeded in shipping medical supplies equivalent to 28 per cent of requirements in the country so far, and have planned, in detail, to reach 100 per cent coverage in all areas, except those that are inaccessible for security reasons.

Winterization has been continuing in camps for internally displaced persons. The events of the past few days in Mazar-e-Sharif and other parts of northern Afghanistan have opened up new opportunities — although new fears have also been raised.

We are reasonably confident that the pipeline from Uzbekistan will soon be activated and that Mazar-e-Sharif can become a hub from which many seriously affected areas of the north and centre of the country can be reached. For areas that will remain inaccessible because of weather, terrain and insecurity, in particular, parts of Ghowr and Badghis, we are making plans for airlifts of food.

While there have been some improvements, the challenges are immense. It will be difficult to maintain this progress as winter intensifies. Even if progress is maintained, there will still be a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Of special concern is the almost complete lack of information on new internal displacement. We have no accurate picture of the current numbers, locations or conditions of the displaced who have left urban centres or conflict areas, especially in the south and east of the country. The situation on the ground is changing fast, and there will continue to be basic problems of access and insecurity that will hamper our ability to deliver assistance.

There is also a protection crisis in Afghanistan. People are forced to flee persecution and conflict, but have nowhere to go. The United Nations continues to urge all neighbouring countries to open their borders to those in need of protection, and urges the international community to share with these countries the burden of such protection, including the financing of aid for refugees and the provision of asylum in third countries.

The United Nations will continue to render desperately needed humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups. It will continue with demining operations and monitor adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law. In carrying out these tasks, the United Nations will work alongside other relief and humanitarian agencies and organizations. It will also rely heavily on Afghan nationals who are capable of and willing to participate in implementation.

United Nations humanitarian agencies for Afghanistan have made extensive contingency plans throughout the region. These approaches will be summarized in a plan of action for the reintroduction of international staff to resume and expand their activities once security conditions are satisfactory.

I would like to say a few words about recovery and reconstruction. The reconstruction of Afghanistan is going to be key in bringing peace and stability to the country. It is not something to be undertaken once a Government is in place, but is at the heart of the political transition. Participation and reconstruction will provide Afghans with an incentive to move from war to peace, and will give them a stake in their society. Reconstruction will provide opportunities for

the absorption of large numbers of men engaged in war, and opportunities for Afghan women, who have been deprived of a voice and participation in society.

World leaders have indicated that this time the international community will have the will and the staying power to help Afghans to reconstruct their country. Reconstruction will focus not only on the physical infrastructure that has been destroyed, but also on the creation of institutions of good governance, the promotion of reconciliation among individuals and groups and the creation of human capital — issues that have been so neglected during the years of war and violence.

Reconstruction efforts will require significant financial commitments and technical assistance from the international community.

Given the toll taken on, and the suffering of, Afghan society, the reconstruction effort will require imagination, flexibility and coordination on the part of Afghans and of those who are willing to assist them in rebuilding their country. International experience has shown that coordination among actors in the aid system has been a challenge.

Reconstruction in Afghanistan will require a clear strategy and the subordination of the interests of individual agencies or donors to the overall agenda of peace and stability. This will require agreement and clear lines of authority and responsibility among the donors and within the United Nations system.

It will be important to consider the creation of a single system for the delivery of flows of money, perhaps through a trust fund that allows for speedy disbursement; provides simplicity for donors; is consistent with the political priority determined by the transitional administration; and makes flows of money dependent on accountability and transparency in the use of those funds.

All actors must accept the principle that Afghans will be in charge and must have ownership of the process, as long as they adhere to the rules of transparency and accountability.

Before concluding this statement, allow me to say the following. The men and women of Afghanistan have suffered much and have been disappointed often. They refuse interference, yet they call for help. They expect much from the United Nations, and they are not sure that the United Nations will deliver. They do not understand why their country is being attacked; why what little infrastructure is there is being destroyed; and why civilians, including children, are being killed by stray bombs.

The processes being proposed are not perfect. The provisional institutions whose creation is suggested will not include everyone who should be there, and they may include some whose credentials many in Afghanistan have doubts about.

But let everyone please remember that what is hopefully to be achieved is the elusive peace that the people of Afghanistan have yearned for for so long. The provisional institutions being discussed, including the broad-based interim government, are the beginning, not the end, of the road. They are not going to be there for very long, and their basic aims are precisely to restore to the people of Afghanistan their right to speak freely and to participate, on an equal footing, in the management of the affairs of their country.

But if it is fair to call on the people of Afghanistan to be patient and tolerant, I am sure that the Council will agree with me that the people of Afghanistan have the right to expect much from the international community. The Council, the General Assembly, Member States, other international institutions, non-governmental organizations and the public at large must also show the patience and determination required to see this process through to its full conclusion.

The people of Afghanistan have endured more than 20 years of war and misery. The conflict has spilled over to neighbouring countries. It has threatened their internal stability and placed a tremendous burden on their already limited means. I appeal to all to show the people of Afghanistan that we are not going to give up on them this time and that we are going to show genuine solidarity and real generosity.

Mr. Straw (United Kingdom): I would first like to begin by expressing my appreciation for the remarks made this morning by the Secretary-General and by Ambassador Brahimi, and to say how we salute their indefatigable efforts in pursuit of peace and stability in Afghanistan, particularly over the period since 11 September.

This morning's news of the retreat of the Taliban from the capital, Kabul, is justification itself for the

military strategy which has been pursued. The Taliban placed themselves at the heart of the evil Al Qaeda network. They were both its protectors and its apologists. The Taliban also caused untold suffering to the people of Afghanistan, denying women basic rights and basic education; executing women in public; sponsoring the world's drug trade; ensuring that 90 per cent of the heroin on the streets of Europe came from that country; and also, by their appalling mismanagement of that country, leading millions to flee it. It is worth remembering that almost all of the millions of refugees who are collected at, or just outside, the borders of Afghanistan or who have fled further afield were refugees before 11 September.

The Taliban are now on the run. With their flight, the world, and particularly Afghanistan, has taken a step towards becoming a safer and a better place. But, as the Secretary-General and Ambassador Brahimi have warned, this, of course, is by no means over.

The news was dramatic, but I also believe the news overnight was a great relief, because the capital, Kabul — the largest city — is of huge symbolic importance, and the fact that it has fallen with relatively little bloodshed is important and certainly beyond some of the possibilities that existed before the military coalition — before this happened. It is also welcome that this has happened before the onset of winter.

But I say, too — and I say this particularly to representatives of the Northern Alliance — that the whole world expects higher and better behaviour from those who are now inside Kabul than happened before. The world will be watching for restraint by the Northern Alliance, not only hoping but also monitoring its behaviour, because here is an opportunity for the Northern Alliance and for the other non-Taliban parties to establish a broad-based government which meets the central tenets of the United Nations and, in doing so, ensures the readmission of Afghanistan into the community of nations. But the responsibility of ensuring that this can happen depends on the deeds, and not just on the words, of those parties that have now taken Kabul.

When this conflict began, the Secretary-General showed great wisdom in appointing Ambassador Brahimi and in sponsoring intensive discussions in the international community about the requirements for stability and security once this conflict had finished.

I think that, in the short space of time since the original Security Council resolutions, we have established a very clear international consensus about the four essential conditions for that stability, peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

First, these arrangements have to be achieved under the auspices of the United Nations. Secondly — to pick up a phrase used by the Secretary-General in his address — we have to ensure the end of interference by external forces, by the countries in the region and by others with bigger aspirations. But alongside that end to interference, we have to see the beginning of sustained, agreed and cooperative support from the international community for the new administration and the new government of Afghanistan.

I think that we in the international community have particular responsibilities in respect of two countries which have borne the brunt of refugees from Afghanistan — namely Iran and Pakistan — and I certainly welcome the very constructive approach which has been adopted to Afghanistan by the Presidents of both Iran and of Pakistan.

Thirdly, we have accepted that, within that framework of benign but active support from the international community, it is for the Afghans themselves to decide exactly how they deliver that broad-based, representative, multi-ethnic Government.

And, fourthly, in order that that should be achieved, the international community has to be committed to Afghanistan for the long term because, to pick up the point made just a moment ago by Ambassador Brahimi, I think the Afghans are right to be very angry that the international community and key countries in the international community have in the past gone into Afghanistan and then walked away. The consequences of that were left with the Afghan people, and not principally with the countries that walked off.

There are, I believe, four immediate points that we have to focus on in the Council today. First, there needs to be a very early gathering of the internal Afghan parties, as Ambassador Brahimi has suggested. Certainly, we in the United Kingdom stand ready to provide whatever assistance we can to assist with that process. That is an essential first step to the establishment of a broad-based Government under United Nations auspices. I was very pleased and interested to hear from Ambassador Brahimi about the

detailed steps that he proposes should be taken to get that civil administration and broad-based Government established.

Secondly, we have to get humanitarian aid into Afghanistan in greater measure for those who have suffered and starved under the Taliban rule in that country. Thanks to the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif, in the north, and now Kabul, the opportunities for humanitarian relief are significantly greater than existed even a week or so ago, but so are the challenges. Above all, so are the expectations of the Afghan people and the world that we meet the challenge of humanitarian aid as vigorously as the partners in the coalition have met the prior challenge of military action. It is important that agencies see that the provision of relief, recovery and reconstruction are part of a single plan, not separate.

Thirdly, we have to get a United Nations presence on the ground in Kabul, as soon as physically possible, to provide the eyes and ears of the international community and to start the process of creating civil administration. That of course involves considerations of their security, and that of the territory generally, in which the military coalition and other countries have an important interim role to play.

Fourthly, I think the Council itself needs to take early action to address the longer-term security and stability of the region and to ensure the right international military and security presence to achieve that — again, taking account not only of what Ambassador Brahimi said were the preferred options, which obviously include an all-Afghan security force, but also the reality that, with the best will in the world, that force may take some time to assemble, train and organize.

The last point I wanted to make in terms of immediate action was to pick up on what Ambassador Brahimi said about the need to get skilled Afghans who are in the immediate region — in Iran and Pakistan as well as in the much wider diaspora — and facilitate their transfer into Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a poor country economically — one of the poorest in the world — but it is not poor in terms of the intellectual abilities and skills of its people. That is shown by the way in which many parts of Afghanistan have been the cradle of our world civilization. There are many highly skilled Afghans around the world. There are many in the United Kingdom. I wish to say that in the United Kingdom we are now taking steps to work out programmes to enable those Afghans resident in the United Kingdom who have the necessary skills and wish to go back to Afghanistan to play a part in the reconstruction of that country immediately to do so. We are certainly also very ready to provide ideas that we have to other countries that host members of the Afghan diaspora so that we can get a coordinated support programme for such transfers of those skilled people back to Afghanistan.

My last point is that we also must keep the focus on the fight against international terrorism. The Al Qaeda organization is down, but it may well not be out. We do have to ensure that they are wholly defeated. There is nothing that can directly assuage the suffering of those who lost loved ones on 11 September, nor of those innocents who have suffered so grievously over the years at the hands of the Taliban. But the news today, and I hope our decisions this week and the action by the United Nations and the international community, should provide them with some much-needed relief.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Let me, on behalf of Ukraine, welcome you, Mr. Minister, as you preside over the Security Council at this very important meeting. I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who is taking part in this meeting, and to commend him for his commitment and personal involvement in the issues related to Afghanistan. We also welcome the opportunity to meet the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Brahimi. We want to thank him for his very comprehensive briefing and valuable proposals for a peaceful settlement.

The attention of the entire international community is today focused on Afghanistan in alarm and hope, particularly in the light of the most recent military developments in the country reported this morning. The people of that country have been victims of the criminal Taliban regime, which not only imposed cruel terror against its own people by creating an atmosphere of peril in the entire region but also brought about a real threat to the lives of people in different parts of the globe.

We approach the present situation in and around Afghanistan primarily in the context of the global fight against terrorists, who found safe haven in the territory

of that country. In that connection, permit me to refer to the statement made by Ukraine's President, Leonid Kuchma, on 6 November at the Warsaw Conference on terrorism:

> "Terrorism cannot be 'European', 'Asian', 'Afghan', 'Chechen', 'Islamic' or 'Christian'. Terrorism is an enemy without a nation, nationality or religion. It is armed with hatred and new means provided by the era of globalization".

To prevent the threat of war and terrorism from ever again emanating from the territory of Afghanistan, that country needs peace and stability, which would lay the foundations for its economic and spiritual rebirth. Although today it seems to the parties to the conflict that the military option is a realistic way to resolve the inter-Afghan conflict, there is in fact no alternative to a broad political dialogue involving everyone — I emphasize, all ethnic, political and religious groups in Afghanistan. The Ukraine is convinced that the United Nations should play the leading role in arranging such a dialogue by supporting those representatives of the Afghan society who sincerely want to bring back peace and stability to their land. We welcome the ensuing dialogue with the participation of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brahimi.

I would like to share the main conclusion that we draw from this discussion: the need to bring all international efforts aimed at resolving the conflict in Afghanistan under the aegis of the United Nations increasingly comes to the fore. We also believe that the role of the Secretary-General in supporting the political process in Afghanistan will remain extremely important at all stages. In this connection, the Secretary-General may fully count on the support of my Government.

Internal stability in Afghanistan is impossible without external support, primarily from the neighbouring countries. The Ukraine welcomes the Declaration on the Situation in Afghanistan, adopted by the "six plus two" group at its meeting in New York yesterday. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of these States made it clear that they are ready to contribute to achieving peace in Afghanistan.

Next month the Ukraine's term as a member of the Security Council will come to an end. While participating in the work of this highly respected body, our efforts were aimed at contributing as much as possible to resolving the Afghan problem. Despite the existing difficulties — and we realize how great they are — the Ukraine is deeply persuaded that peace in Afghanistan can be established and that the only path goes through broadly based national reconciliation.

In the 1960s, when I was a student, I had the pleasure of studying with fellow students from Afghanistan. They represented the elite of the Afghan people. They worked hard to gain and expand their knowledge, to rise above the routine of everyday life.

The question of the nature of power is an eternal one. However, the struggle for power often takes horrific and blood-shedding forms, and the developments in Afghanistan manifestly prove that. Today in that country a culture, spiritual foundations and values that humankind has created and cherished for centuries are being destroyed. This destruction is not only physical; it is also spiritual.

These recollections lead me to think that it is important that our efforts lead to the revival of the nation's spirit and its belief in a better future. If we fulfil this mission, we can be confident that the conflicts like the one in Afghanistan can be resolved.

The President: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to Afghanistan, Ambassador Brahimi, for their valuable briefings. I also wish to commend the presidency of Jamaica for convening this important open debate of the Security Council on Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a global concern. Given the spillover effects of the conflict in Afghanistan to Central Asia, as well as the special role of regional players in bringing peace to Afghanistan, the views of members of the "six plus two" group and other key players would be of particular interest. We hope that this open debate, with the presence of so many Foreign Ministers, will contribute to the development of a global consensus on a coherent and comprehensive long-term strategy to bring peace to Afghanistan. Singapore has consistently called for such a comprehensive strategy since we joined the Council in January this year.

The United Nations involvement in Afghanistan is not new. United Nations humanitarian agencies have been helping Afghanistan for decades. It is a pity that there has been little global awareness of the good work

the Organization has been doing. Hopefully, this meeting will contribute to greater awareness of the pivotal role of the United Nations.

Afghanistan has endured more than 20 years of devastating conflict. Today the Afghan people are experiencing another tragedy as a result of Al Qaeda's decision to seek refuge in their country. The current military operation in Afghanistan is clearly not directed against the Afghan people, but against the perpetrators of the most horrible acts of international terrorism and those who support them. We welcome the assurances that civilian casualties will be minimized to help sustain the global coalition against terrorism.

Singapore agrees that a political solution to Afghanistan cannot be imposed. We welcome the efforts undertaken by prominent Afghan leaders and hope that the Afghan people will put aside their past differences and work together to build a broad-based, multi-ethnic, fully representative Government. We fully support the role of neutral third-party facilitators like the United Nations in catalyzing the process. We wish Special Representative Ambassador Brahimi every success and, indeed, the Afghan people are counting on him.

Several international reports have documented the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. The infant, child and maternal mortality rates in Afghanistan are among the highest in the world. Massive humanitarian assistance is needed urgently, especially before the onset of winter. Singapore is doing its part to contribute to the humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. Our national contribution totals $1.16 million.

It is not surprising that a humanitarian crisis of such magnitude has generated refugees who have even tried to reach Australia and Europe. However, the bulk of the burden has been borne by Afghanistan's neighbours, especially Pakistan and Iran. Those countries host one of the largest refugee populations in the world. They, too, need urgent assistance. More "in situ" solutions should be found, particularly within Afghanistan, wherever possible.

Providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, while badly needed, can also be compared to applying a "band-aid" to a patient suffering many wounds. Apart from first aid, the patient also needs a blood transfusion, antibiotics and long-term medical care. A generation of Afghan people has been displaced and abandoned, in an impoverished environment awash in weapons and criminal enterprises. Without a long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction programme, any peace process and transitional government will remain fragile and reversible.

Therefore, immediate work should start on developing plans for the comprehensive rehabilitation of Afghanistan, supported by developmental agencies like the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other donor communities. We have to convince the Afghan people that the international community is ready to help them. If we can win their hearts and minds, we will advance the logic of peace and change the political calculus from conflict and strife to that of a stable and responsible member of the international community.

The challenges facing the international community in Afghanistan and its region are daunting. We must show our determination to meet those challenges. The Security Council should draw from the important input arising from today's open debate and start formulating key principles which will guide the work of the United Nations in drafting a resolution. After reading this morning's newspapers, it is clear that the Security Council must work even faster to formulate these principles. In the past few hours, news reports indicate that the Taliban forces have withdrawn from Kabul, and Northern Alliance forces are entering the city. If we want to avoid a repetition of the civil wars and the loss of innocent lives that seem to have accompanied each change of regime, we need to find the right political formula to avoid disasters, and as soon as possible.

As Mr. Brahimi stressed this morning, time is of the essence. This morning, Mr. Brahimi proposed a concrete set of steps to bring stability to Afghanistan. We urge the Council to consider his comprehensive proposals quickly, and we are pleased that the Council will convene in informal consultations tomorrow to discuss Mr. Brahimi's proposals.

At the same time, embarking on the difficult task of rebuilding Afghanistan, we should not forget that it is one of the world's many trouble spots deserving of its attention and involvement. The big lesson from Afghanistan is that the fate of a distant country, so seemingly detached from the immediate concerns of most parts of the world, can immediately have a global

impact. I believe this should spur the Security Council to redouble our efforts in fulfilling our primary responsibility of ensuring that international peace and security is maintained. The United Nations and the international community must stay the course in our efforts in Afghanistan and elsewhere. It is only all too clear that tragic consequences can result from a job not properly completed.

Mr. Petersen (Norway): I thank the Secretary-General for his leadership and Special Representative Brahimi for his comprehensive briefing and his presentation of a road map for future peace and stability in Afghanistan. He and the Secretary-General deserve praise for the urgency with which they are proceeding at this critical time.

Breaking the vicious cycle of war and misrule in Afghanistan is long overdue. The military results we are witnessing give hope for real progress. It is now vital to maintain calm and avoid retribution.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan has ignored binding Security Council resolutions demanding that it stop harbouring and supporting terrorists. The refusal by the Taliban regime to comply continued even after it became clear that terrorists based and trained in Afghanistan were behind the attacks on 11 September. This left no alternative but to use military force — in accordance with the right of self-defence.

The Taliban's setbacks will hopefully facilitate a political solution. They will also allow us to further increase our humanitarian assistance and initiate urgent support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan's war-torn society.

The Taliban disregard humanitarian principles, international law and human rights. They are the major cause of the suffering of the Afghan people, not least the oppression of women. We are still deeply concerned about the obstacles facing humanitarian organizations in Taliban-controlled areas. The Taliban must ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel and their full access to people in need.

Norway is pleased that Pakistan is opening its border to the most vulnerable refugees. International solidarity and burden-sharing with neighbouring countries is called for, particularly with Pakistan and Iran. Norway is prepared to do its part.

There is an immediate need to increase humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan before the onset of winter. This is especially urgent in the most vulnerable areas in the north. We applaud the tireless efforts of the United Nations agencies, working under difficult circumstances. Norway has recently stepped up its assistance, disbursing nearly $35 million this year.

Only a broad-based Government that includes representatives from all major groups can bring stability to Afghanistan. Only a Government committed to basic human rights and development can ensure long-term peace and security. Norway therefore strongly supports the efforts by Mr. Brahimi to help the Afghans lay the foundation for a lasting political solution. The proposals presented by him today deserve our support. We must now transform them into reality. We owe this to the Afghan people.

Our efforts to assist Afghanistan will only be effective if they are well coordinated and part of a comprehensive political and economic strategy. Such a strategy must be supported by a necessary security presence. Humanitarian assistance must pave the way for long-term rehabilitation. Peace-building and reconstruction must start now. The United Nations must play a leading role. Norway commends the United Nations for its swift reaction. We will do our utmost to help the United Nations in its endeavours.

The need for a coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance and reconstruction will also guide Norway's chairmanship of the Afghanistan Support Group, starting in January next year.

We must stand united in helping Afghanistan come back into the family of nations. We must stand united in helping the Afghans get rid of the terrorists and their supporters. We must stand by the oppressed people of Afghanistan.

Long-term commitments and efforts are needed. The United Nations can provide the tools. We — the Member States — must provide the means.

Mr. Gayan (Mauritius): We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for convening this very important meeting on Afghanistan. Allow me also to thank His Excellency Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi for his very comprehensive briefing, and we commend him for the very arduous and strenuous task that he has undertaken. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his very important statement.

The 11 September terrorist attacks shocked the world. But they were also an eye-opener for the international community, which woke up to the atrocities and indignities which the Taliban regime has for many years been inflicting on ordinary Afghan women, men and children. While the Taliban regime was brutal in the treatment that it meted out to its people, it gave comfort and shelter to terrorists and to the Al Qaeda network. We are relieved to hear and to know that the global coalition against terrorism is now showing that the end of the Taliban regime is near.

Events on the ground in Afghanistan are unfolding at a very fast pace. As we meet here to consider the situation there, we have a duty to ensure that the response we provide is commensurate with the dimension and magnitude of the problems which ordinary Afghans will face with the collapse of the Taliban regime.

With the Taliban regime on the run, there will be the temptation on the part of the Northern Alliance to seek revenge and reprisals. There is therefore an urgent need to ensure that there a minimum of law and order in Kabul. It is to the United Nations that ordinary Afghans will look for this particular comfort.

The United Nations has a daunting task, and, whether it likes it or not, it will have to be closely involved not only in the process of setting up an interim Government but also in the post-war reconstruction.

The priorities are clear, but they are by no means easy. Nor are they by any means easy to achieve. We consider that the interim government that Mr. Brahimi has talked about will have to be set up under the traditional *Loya Jirgah* system. The ideal of a stable, broad-based, responsible and accountable government can be realized, and it is our belief that after decades of conflict and instability the Afghan people will cherish an era where rules instead of brutal terror govern their lives.

The fall of the Taliban regime must not become a temptation for its neighbours to impose a government of their liking. We support, in this context, the work of the "six plus two" group; the work that they have been doing on Afghanistan is very valuable. But we also believe that this team must be expanded to include other countries that may contribute to the provision of help and support and that will later have a role to play in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We are convinced that under no circumstances should the territorial integrity of Afghanistan be imperilled. But we are sure that the Afghan people must have breathed a sigh of relief when, with the Taliban on the run, they realized that they could start to live normal lives, just like everybody else in the world.

I need to say a word about the humanitarian crisis. This crisis is immense. While I was listening to Mr. Brahimi, I could not help but think that the task ahead will be extremely arduous and difficult. But we are sure — and we hope — that those in need of assistance will be able to get it, because the international community is committed to providing this help. We also hope that this help will be provided before the onset of winter. In this context, we wish to salute the courage of the United Nations personnel who are directly involved and engaged in the provision of relief to the Afghans.

In conclusion, the time has come for testing the international community's commitment not to walk away when the threat disappears. Whatever we do here must always take into account that any failure in Afghanistan — any failure on the part of the international community to reconstruct Afghanistan — will undermine the confidence and trust that people have in the United Nations system and, in a word, in world leaders.

We are sure that under the guidance of the Secretary-General and his team, whom we support, the end of the crisis in Afghanistan is not far off, and we hope that very soon we will be able to welcome a responsible and accountable Afghan Government into our midst.

Mr. Sidibe (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, it is a pleasure for the delegation of Mali to see the Security Council meeting under your presidency to consider the situation in Afghanistan. I wish to welcome the presence of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to thank him for his important statement at this important meeting of the Council. Our thanks go also to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. We are grateful for his high-quality briefing this morning, which contained a clear concept and vision. It was very useful.

I would now like to make the following comments.

First, like other delegations, we too are concerned by the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. As indicated by the Special Representative, this situation requires sustained efforts on the part of the international community. We believe that everything should be done to enable the quick delivery of food aid within Afghanistan and that it should be distributed to Afghans within Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries. The fate of the most vulnerable groups of people in Afghanistan, particularly women, children and the elderly, should be given special attention. Likewise, it is crucial to give special attention to the plight of refugees in neighbouring countries, particularly in Pakistan and Iran. We thank the Governments that have agreed to keep open the roads through which relief is delivered, and we appeal to Member States to come to the assistance of these countries so that they can deal with the constant flow of Afghan refugees.

In this context, we think that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should continue to play an important role in coordinating emergency relief assistance for Afghanistan. We also congratulate the humanitarian organizations for the outstanding work they have done, and we encourage them to continue their efforts for the Afghan people within the country and in neighbouring countries. To this end, we think it is imperative to ensure the security of the personnel of humanitarian organizations. We encourage all those who have contributed so generously to the United Nations relief fund to speed up disbursement of their pledges. In this respect, the international community should live up to its promises made at the beginning of the conflict, whereby the Afghan people would not become a target of war and that they would not be forgotten.

My second comment has to do with the political situation. Mali believes that the United Nations has a decisive role to play, particularly by facilitating the transition from war to peace and by assisting the Afghan people to participate actively in a broad-based dialogue at the end of which an overall political plan could be worked out and executed. It is crucial that the territorial integrity of Afghanistan be preserved and that the key element of this plan be the Afghan people, who have the right to live freely and with dignity. The international community should seek to set up a broad-based Government, one that is multi-ethnic and fully representative of the Afghan people. Accordingly, Mali welcomes the talks that Mr. Brahimi has had with the authorities of Pakistan, Afghan leaders living in Pakistan, Iranian authorities and other leaders of the region in order to find a consensus solution to the conflict.

We welcome the holding of a meeting, in the margins of the General Assembly's general debate, of the representatives of the "six plus two" group, and we urge all parties to abide by the principles of international law and international humanitarian law following the capture by the Northern Alliance of Mazar-e-Sharif and the fall of Kabul.

In conclusion, I would stress the role that the Secretary-General and his Special Representative continue to play in Afghanistan. We encourage and fully support all of the efforts under way to find a positive outcome to the Afghan conflict. Mali reiterates its strong support for any initiative to settle the crisis that would reflect the higher interests of the Afghan people.

Mr. Cowen (Ireland): I would like to thank the presidency of the Council for having organized this important public meeting on Afghanistan — particularly important in the light of events in the past hours and days — and to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General and to his Special Representative, Mr. Brahimi, for their most important interventions this morning. I want to assure them of Ireland's continuing and strong support for their efforts to achieve an equitable and balanced solution to the crisis in Afghanistan.

My colleague, Louis Michel, the Foreign Minister of Belgium, will later deliver a statement on behalf of the European Union, and Ireland fully associates itself with his remarks.

I think that with military success come very great political and humanitarian responsibilities. There have been too many atrocities in the past in Afghanistan — too much bloodshed and too little respect for human life and human dignity. I think that a compelling and unanimous message needs to go from this Council this morning that the mistakes of the past must not be repeated.

We seem today to have a new military situation, but above all we need a new beginning for the people of Afghanistan, politically and on the humanitarian front, and in relation to the dignity of the person and

those universal values that bind us all together as members of this assembly. We have seen great abuse of human rights, particularly those of women and girls, and of respect for human life itself in Afghanistan. We need to end this nightmare now. I hope that with wise intervention of the Secretary-General and Mr. Brahimi — which is based, I think, on a realistic assessment of the present situation, not as we would like it to be, but as it is — Afghanis themselves will take up their responsibilities. I hope that people who have not been able to provide a unifying element in their country will now see the higher responsibility to the people of Afghanistan, who have suffered enough under this tyranny, that they will not have it revisited upon them in another form of tyranny in the future.

We all know that the desperate situation of the Afghan people did not begin on 7 October. Ordinary Afghans have been the victims of more than two decades of violence and, more recently, of the extremism of the Taliban regime. A generation of Afghans has known little else but conflict, poverty, malnourishment and human rights abuse.

My Government believes that Afghanistan must not be allowed to remain a failed State where continuing internal conflicts breed illegal activities and provide a safe haven for terrorists. We are determined that the international process impelled by the current crisis should bring an end to the misery of Afghans and provide them, as I have said, with a new beginning.

We hope that the military campaign against the Al Qaeda terrorist network and the Taliban regime that shelters it will achieve its objectives in as short a time-frame as possible, and that every effort will continue to be made to avoid civilian casualties. We also appeal to all sides involved in the conflict to respect human rights and international conventions on the conduct of war. This morning, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported in detail on how the United Nations intends to coordinate a concerted international effort to assist the people of Afghanistan in establishing a broad-based and multi-ethnic Government. That effort, of course, has to be accompanied by a long-term, comprehensive and generous programme of support for the post-military rehabilitation and reconstruction of that country.

Ireland strongly considers that, as the military campaign is pursued, a visible and fully effective strategy must be put in place for addressing the humanitarian needs of the innocent people of Afghanistan. We commend the sustained efforts of the United Nations and its agencies to find practical and flexible solutions, and we appreciate the fact that deliveries to Afghanistan have increased substantially in recent days. There is a continuing and urgent need to translate the pledges and commitments that the international community has made in terms of financial assistance to the United Nations system into active financial disbursements into the system so that the United Nations can proceed with its work apace. We commend the bravery and courage of the many native Afghans who continue to seek to distribute this food aid and non-food aid under the most difficult circumstances.

The distribution of humanitarian assistance within Afghanistan must be a priority, especially with the imminent onset of winter. It is important that international staff be enabled to return in safety to Afghanistan as soon as possible. In that regard, we hope that the recent takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif and of Kabul will facilitate humanitarian access, and we welcome the deployment of a security assessment team there, as well as the deployment of United Nations personnel in Faizabad. We deplore the harassment of aid workers and call on all those concerned to facilitate the distribution of supplies to vulnerable Afghans in need.

As the Secretary-General has said, there is a need for all States to disburse their generous commitments as soon as possible. For its part, the Government of Ireland has already committed and transferred into the system $5 million this year for emergency humanitarian relief in Afghanistan, and there are a number of Irish non-governmental agencies active in the region. We also stress the importance of providing financial assistance to neighbouring States, which are already host to a large number of refugees, to help them also to cope with the crisis.

At the same time as pursuing humanitarian efforts, we must focus on the long-term political objectives in Afghanistan. We believe that only a fully representative and broad-based Government will express the will of all its people and ensure long-term peace and security in the country. Such a Government must comprise representatives of all ethnic groups, including Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras and Pashtuns. We agree with the road map that was set out this morning

by Ambassador Brahimi, and we pledge him our full support.

As to the best way of achieving those objectives, which will by no means be easy, Ireland considers strongly that the process should be led by the United Nations. As a member of the Security Council, we will work to ensure that a sufficient mandate is developed. Although the evolving situation on the ground will necessitate flexibility and adaptability, endorsement of the post-Taliban Government by the United Nations will be an indispensable guarantee of its legitimacy. The process will need to be undertaken in a secure environment, and we need to examine carefully the various options in that regard with a view to endorsing the appropriate arrangements. We take careful note of what Ambassador Brahimi had to say in that respect. We will be very attentive to any recommendations that the Secretary-General may make in this regard. We will also need to examine a framework for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of those involved in the conflict in due course.

I agree with other speakers that the cooperation of neighbouring States is vital to a permanent solution, and we very much appreciate Mr. Brahimi's efforts to consult widely and to take into account the range of views and considerations. We believe that groups such as the "six plus two" and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have an important role to play, and we encourage the countries of the region to intensify their consultations with one another.

Given the total breakdown in Afghanistan's economic and social infrastructure, the United Nations should plan to move from emergency humanitarian relief, through a recovery phase including the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, to reconstruction and rehabilitation. Close coordination of all agencies and organizations concerned will be important to ensure that this is done in a phased and seamless manner. The initial use of quick-impact projects could help to jump-start the economy and to promote eradication of the cultivation and trade in opium. As a State member of the European Union, we stand ready to contribute to that process.

For many years, Ireland has condemned human rights violations in Afghanistan, in particular the appalling discrimination against women and girls. Those practices must be reversed, and the new Government must not only observe but also promote international obligations in respect of human and minority rights. We believe that an immediate focus should be put on providing basic social services, including education for girls, which has been denied them for many years. In the meantime, and as the military situation evolves, we call on all parties to respect international obligations in respect of human rights.

The Afghan people must be reassured that the international community is committed to help them develop a stable and peaceful society, no matter how long that might take. For its part, the Government of Ireland will continue to work on the national level, through the United Nations and with its European Union partners, to do all that is humanly possible to respond to the emergency humanitarian crisis and to the medium-term and long-term needs of the Afghan people.

Mr. Fernández de Soto (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by thanking Ambassador Brahimi for the information and proposals he presented today. I would like to assure him that he can count on Colombia's firm support as he undertakes a task that we all know is so inherently complicated.

Colombia vigorously condemned the acts of international terrorism committed on 11 September 2001 and has joined unequivocally in the unanimous support that the Security Council has offered for the military action that is currently under way on the territory of Afghanistan.

We have also acted decisively in the Council by shouldering specific responsibilities in the only current sanctions regime against international terrorism as a threat to international peace and security. I refer in particular to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1333 (2000) and 1363 (2001) on the situation in Afghanistan, whose demands the Taliban regime has systematically violated.

We have witnessed the complexity of the political, humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan and are aware of its regional and international implications. We know that the United Nations faces a challenge of unknown proportions. The decisions that we will adopt regarding the future of Afghanistan will mark the beginning of a journey along a road whose destination, at this moment, it is the obligation of the international community to help construct. Our main objective must be the preservation

of international peace and security, which have been threatened by the Taliban regime. To achieve this objective, we must continue to take decisions that contribute to a solution to the situation in Afghanistan.

We trust that the numerous consultations undertaken by Mr. Brahimi and other relevant actors will provide us with guidelines on what should be our first step towards a transition effectively leading to a lasting solution.

Today we have heard the specific proposals of Mr. Brahimi, which undeniably contain important components that open up a way of hope; we thank him for that. There is no doubt that the Council should examine the situation as soon as possible and adopt decisions relating to the vision and the proposals that Mr. Brahimi has presented to us today.

It is our hope that this transitional solution will be constructed, first and foremost, on the basis of an ongoing, fluid dialogue that embraces all sectors of Afghan society. In addition, we hope that this same sort of dialogue will be maintained with respect to regional actors and the rest of the international community, including all members of the Security Council. This practice is the principal guarantee that the legitimacy, coherence and strength of decisions taken will be maintained.

The process of dialogue will enable the country itself to create a broad-based, participatory, multi-ethnic coalition Government that is built from the grass roots rather than imposed from above and is fully representative of the Afghan people. Such a Government would, for a certain period, lay the groundwork for a solution that we all hope will be permanent.

What should the role of the United Nations be in the search for this temporary solution? Some have suggested that our Organization should be solely responsible for carrying out this task. Others, pointing to the problematic history of Afghanistan, have even hinted that the United Nations should avoid taking any role in this country.

From our own perspective, however, it would be more appropriate for our Organization to play the role of the facilitator of a process led by the various national and regional stakeholders concerned. In this way, the Afghans would have to ensure the fulfilment of their own responsibilities, and the United Nations, with the direct participation of the Security Council and the General Assembly, under the coordination of the Secretary-General, would provide the necessary support for this undertaking.

Hence, it is most important to define with the greatest political precision the role of the United Nations, including relevant responsibilities for the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The Council would monitor political and security processes that have progressed unevenly. Council members would help to ensure that the political and security agendas are compatible and move in the same direction. For its part, the General Assembly also has its role, a role that must be reclaimed and preserved. The Assembly is the principal source of international legitimacy, and it would therefore be advisable to have the support of all Members of the United Nations for both the temporary and, later, the more permanent solution.

If we succeed in establishing a transitional Government with the characteristics mentioned, what should we expect from it? We should expect it to have the capacity to respect human rights, to meet the needs of the Afghan people, to contribute to regional and international stability and to eradicate from its territory the links with international terrorism and related activities such as the flow of illicit drugs and the trade in weapons.

I would like to make a few concluding points. First, we wish to express our particular appreciation to the Governments of the region that have shouldered the responsibility of providing humanitarian assistance to the thousands of Afghan refugees who have fled their land in order to survive. Our special appreciation also goes to all the humanitarian workers, particularly those of the United Nations system, for their great sacrifices and valuable service in alleviating the humanitarian consequences of the actions and negligence of the Taliban regime in and outside Afghanistan. We appeal to the donor community to continue to share the responsibility of resolving this humanitarian crisis.

Finally, we hope that the Security Council will continue to be part of a process of close cooperation with the regional actors. In this connection, we have taken careful note of the statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the "six plus two" group, in which they express their support for the Afghans in their effort to get rid of the Taliban regime

and to bring to justice the Al Qaeda network and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan. We support these objectives.

We also trust — as the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom indicated — that the ousting of the Taliban regime and the reconstruction of Afghanistan will not mean reducing the international community's efforts in the global fight against terrorism. That would be a great error on our part.

Mr. Tang Jiaxuan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and his Special Representative, Mr. Brahimi, for his briefing. We endorse the Secretary-General's analysis of the situation in Afghanistan and the views contained in his statement. We believe that Mr. Brahimi's opinions and recommendations concerning the political arrangement, security, the humanitarian situation and the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan reflect the requirements of developments in the country and are positive and constructive. The Chinese Government will study them in depth.

After two decades of civil war, the current situation in Afghanistan is all the more turbulent and complex. The humanitarian situation has further deteriorated and is having repercussions in the neighbouring countries. If it is not soon eased and contained, it will become a threat to the peace and stability of the whole region.

With the changing situation on the battlefield in Afghanistan, the question of a potential power vacuum has cropped up. There are ever greater dangers of large-scale social chaos in that country. It is therefore imperative for the international community, the United Nations in particular, to accelerate the process of a political settlement of the Afghan question, including facilitating the establishment of a transitional administration, and to set in motion Afghanistan's reconstruction as soon as possible. At this critical juncture, the United Nations should play a leading role and provide, together with the international community, the necessary political, technical and financial assistance to Afghanistan on an urgent basis.

Diverse plans concerning the post-war arrangement in Afghanistan have been proposed by various parties concerned and some consensus was reached at yesterday's ministerial meeting of the "six plus two" group. We should encourage all parties and factions in Afghanistan to intensify political dialogue with a view to reaching agreement on the composition of the transitional administration and avoiding the occurrence of a power vacuum. At the very least, they should reach basic agreement on the political framework for the future arrangement. We are of the view that the transitional administration should be broad-based, fully represent the interests of all ethnic groups and live in amity with all countries, especially its neighbours. That is the only approach that can contribute to lasting peace. It goes without saying that, in the final analysis, any solution to the Afghan question must be decided by the Afghan people themselves.

We are ready to take into serious consideration any proposals or recommendations that are conducive to restoring the peace, stability and neutrality of Afghanistan and in the fundamental interests of people of all ethnic groups in that country. China has provided emergency humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees. It is our hope that the international community will make a greater effort to ease the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The Chinese Government is willing to make constructive efforts, together with all sides, for the promotion of a comprehensive political solution to the issue of Afghanistan, with the assistance of the United Nations.

Mr. Védrine (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to pay tribute to the statement made and outstanding work done by Mr. Brahimi, which will be even more important and decisive in coming days.

My first comment refers to the fact that, even if we have questions about the follow-up, the essential thing is that we are starting to attain our goal of depriving Al Qaeda of its support by bringing about the collapse of the Taliban regime, which has been atrocious from many perspectives. Thus, our primary emotion today is one of satisfaction strongly tempered by concern.

As we prepare to fulfil our commitment to creating a new Afghanistan, it is very important that those who have authority in the field — military leaders, for the time being — show concern for the security of the populace. They must control their troops and not perpetuate the cycle of reprisals and vengeance. They must behave responsibly, as they know we all expect them to do.

Of course, we will need subsequently to accelerate the preparations that have been made in recent weeks. Lakhdar Brahimi has proposed the approach we should take towards attaining our goals. France fully supports him, his goals and the phases he has proposed. We have been making similar political proposals since early October and it is now time to implement them without further delay. The faster we move, the better. Specifically, I believe that the United Nations should move as quickly into Kabul and other liberated cities as security conditions allow it to.

We could respond to the acceleration of developments on the ground by launching the political process as early as this week. I do not underestimate the difficulties in this respect. I am aware of them, but I feel that every Afghan leader and every representative of an Afghan entity — from the recognized Government to all other forces — must understand today that all that matters is the future of the country. That understanding must prevail over calculations of influence and balance.

As to humanitarian assistance and to the rebuilding of the country, I believe that we can move quickly from one to the other. I agree that, as proposed by Mr. Brahimi, the Group of 21 should hold a meeting here in New York on Friday, to be chaired by the Secretary-General, whose tireless involvement in the search for a settlement of the Afghan question I commend. The meeting of the Group of 21 could relaunch the process and send a message of our long-term commitment to all the Afghan people.

Together, we will help Afghan men and women to rebuild their country and to create a democratic, representative Government based on an Afghanistan at peace. This moment may be tragic, but it represents a great opportunity. As Mr. Brahimi has suggested, we must therefore speedily define the type of international security presence that we will need there. We fully support Lakhdar Brahimi and we must not squander the best opportunity to come along for Afghanistan in 20 years. The entire world is prepared to help, but all those who hold responsibility, influence or power in Afghanistan must rise to the occasion.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): This meeting comes in the wake of the meeting of foreign ministers of the "six plus two" group yesterday and the important declaration they adopted. I am confident that our deliberations this morning will take the ongoing efforts at resolving the Afghan crisis a decisive step forward.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ambassador Brahimi, for their dedication and commitment to monitoring and to advancing solutions to the critical situation in Afghanistan. The Secretary-General set out this morning the basic parameters of the international community's involvement in Afghanistan and the choices facing us. Ambassador Brahimi has outlined comprehensive suggestions on a possible road map. We are in broad agreement with their assessment and views. As we meet in this Chamber, the situation on the ground is evolving from moment to moment. We need to be seized of this dynamic and to adjust our response quickly and effectively.

Afghanistan's decades of suffering are all-pervasive. Afghans remain mired in a web of conflict, famine, hunger, displacement and endemic poverty in which women, children and the elderly, marginalized as they are, suffer even more. The current phase of the crisis has only exacerbated this precarious situation in various dimensions.

As we work towards a comprehensive solution to the Afghan crisis, the Council needs to focus attention on the key building blocks of such a solution — ending conflict, providing humanitarian assistance, reconciling and arriving at a balanced political settlement, and establishing a broad-based Government structure. The immediate objectives, of course, remain ending hostilities, ensuring security and establishing the rule of law. The long-term goals are massive reconstruction, rehabilitation and development, and plans to facilitate the ultimate return of 4 million people. It is the long-term goals which ultimately provide the international community with a sustainable exit strategy in Afghanistan, hopefully within an early time-frame.

A number of critical aspects relating to these building blocks need therefore to be addressed.

The first aspect is the central role of the United Nations in the post-conflict configuration. This morning, Ambassador Brahimi mapped out a persuasive scenario emphasizing the important convening role of the Organization in bringing together all those concerned with Afghanistan, including the "six plus two" group, the Rome and Cyprus processes and the Peshawar meeting.

The second aspect is reaching a common framework for a transitional Government. Key to this aspect is to quickly set in place a provisional council which is broadly representative of all ethnic, religious and political groups, hopefully including women.

The third aspect is the convening of an emergency *Loya Jirgah* to approve administrative actions, security arrangements and a draft constitution.

Finally, after this transitional phase, a second *Loya Jirgah* would approve the constitution.

The overall goal is to find what Mr. Brahimi called a "home-grown" solution — one which is credible, legitimate and sustainable and leads to a broad-based Government which is responsible, representative, stable and accountable; enjoys both internal and external stability; respects the human rights of the Afghan people; and will never again allow the country to be used as a breeding ground for terror or drug trafficking.

The second building block is a security framework for a post-Taliban governance structure. We are aware of the volatile situation on the ground, and the Secretary-General has outlined it. There is an urgent need for what he called action to avoid a security vacuum. We call upon all the Afghan parties to firmly commit themselves to protecting civilians, particularly women, and to avoid reprisal killings and other forms of abuse. Ensuring respect for human rights and international humanitarian law will be critical for sustaining the new political dispensation in Afghanistan.

In this regard, we would like to call attention to the special emphasis that the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan placed, last week in the Arria Formula meeting, on repealing all repressive laws and practices in Afghanistan. We have also noted the valuable suggestions of Ambassador Brahimi regarding credible security arrangements and assessments, and the essential choice that now faces us between the establishment of an all-Afghan security force and the deployment of a multinational security presence.

The third building block, in our opinion, is a robust public information campaign. Although the majority of Afghans have access to radio, today's Afghanistan is an information-starved territory. Access to objective public information remains poor. From a longer perspective, a wider flow of public information could help address many social ills and other issues.

The fourth building block, of crucial importance, is the humanitarian situation. Six million Afghans are directly affected by this crisis. It remains a major concern for all of us to alleviate the suffering both inside Afghanistan and in the refugee camps of neighbouring countries. While there is now uncertainty as to how long hostilities will continue, ensuring that aid reaches civilians — especially millions of women, children and the elderly, many of them trapped deep inside villages — appears even more difficult than before, with both the holy month of Ramadan and the Central Asian winter fast approaching. There is a great need to help the neighbouring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan, with cross-border deliveries of food and non-food items.

The early disbursement of humanitarian aid and well-coordinated distribution of aid materials have assumed critical importance. This is a moment when international humanitarian aid workers on the ground can improve coordination of the distribution of aid, especially food. As the Irish Foreign Minister has stressed, quick-impact projects are vital in laying the groundwork for reconstruction and development.

Bangladesh continues to pledge its fullest support of concerted efforts to restore freedom and peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. Negroponte (United States): Mr. President, thank you for convening this session and giving us the opportunity to address the pressing and rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan. We all support the Secretary-General and Ambassador Brahimi in their efforts to promote peace, freedom and stability in that suffering country, and we thank Mr. Brahimi for his excellent report this morning.

We meet here at a crucial time. Events are unfolding quickly, even as we speak. On Saturday, President Bush said it clearly: the Al Qaeda terrorists and the Taliban, who harbour them, are virtually indistinguishable. In his words, the Taliban's days of harbouring terrorists are drawing to a close. Now, just 72 hours later, we are watching the collapse of the Taliban in much of Afghanistan.

Several things need to be done now by the United Nations, by the international community and by humanitarian assistance agencies. We all must support

the United Nations and Ambassador Brahimi in urgent efforts to bring together, as soon as possible, Afghans to form an interim authority in the liberated areas. That authority must be representative of and acceptable to Afghans, and it must be supported by all of us, especially the countries of the region, or it will not succeed. An international presence must be re-established as soon as possible. We also must call for restraint on the part of the Afghan liberation forces as they take up their new positions and continue their offensive. Afghanistan does not need another cycle of revenge and retribution as the Taliban collapse.

We must act immediately to increase the flow of humanitarian assistance as the country is liberated. The United States applauds the courage and determination of the international assistance community and urges it to accelerate the already-begun re-entry of assistance personnel and supplies into Afghanistan. My country is eager to continue doing its part.

The United States also urges those in a position to do so to support efforts to ensure the safety and security of the liberated areas, especially to protect Afghan civilians and international personnel.

We are at a historic moment. As terrorism is set to flight, Afghans must know that we will help them rebuild, and support their efforts to achieve the peace which has been so long denied them.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Jamaica, which holds the presidency, and you, Sir, for having organized this meeting on Afghanistan. I would also like to join previous speakers in thanking Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi for his briefing. We all agree that his mission is sensitive, but we also know that he merits the trust of the Secretary-General and the international community. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his unflagging interest in the situation in Afghanistan.

Today's meeting once more attests to the determination of the Security Council to put an end to the suffering of the innocent Afghan people, who, unfortunately, have for many years been held hostage in their own country. There is a danger that the situation may deteriorate, given the continuing military operations and the intensification of fighting between the forces inside the country. The situation will become increasingly critical as winter approaches, making it even more difficult to deliver assistance to the civilian population.

While we understand the urgent need to fight the scourge of terrorism — now that we have all come together to eradicate it — we must also endeavour to ensure that the military campaign led by the coalition against terrorism does not, in its turn, cause despair and confusion among an impoverished population that for several years has been left to its own devices. As Mrs. Mary Robinson has emphasized, the unanimous commitment of the international community to eradicate terrorism should not obscure the fact that all action undertaken to that end must be based upon respect for human rights, and should not result in more innocent victims.

It is in that spirit that we appeal for the civilian population of Afghanistan to be spared the torment of war and destruction. We again support the appeal of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that the war be brought to an end as soon as possible. That would mean relief for the coalition, which would have achieved its objectives; for Afghanistan, which could anticipate a settlement; and for international public opinion.

International humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan is an absolute priority. Tunisia is contributing to the achievement of that by providing assistance through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, given the steadily increasing flow of refugees since 11 September — according to UNHCR, the number has reached 135,000 — it is still likely that the gap will steadily increase between the minimum assistance required by the country and the amount actually provided by the United Nations and donor countries. Furthermore, that fear has been emphasized by Mr. Oshima, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

We are also very concerned about the difficulties related to access and the delivery of assistance, particularly given the arrival of winter, which will close off several transit routes. We encourage the decision taken by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to send a mission to assess the security situation with regard to sending humanitarian assistance by river from Uzbekistan. In this regard, we would also like to thank the countries of the subregion for mobilizing to help Afghan refugees. We welcome their efforts to provide aid and assistance to the thousands of people who are most vulnerable.

It is essential to redeploy United Nations humanitarian personnel within Afghanistan so as to coordinate the humanitarian action. Such dedicated personnel must be provided with the security necessary to enable them effectively to play their role under proper conditions. In this regard, we call upon the local authorities of the forces of the Northern Alliance to guarantee protection for humanitarian personnel in Mazar-e-Sharif, which is now under their control. In this context, we would like to pay tribute to the ongoing efforts of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their staff, including local personnel, who are working under dangerous conditions, sometimes at the cost of their own lives, to provide assistance to the Afghan population and to refugees who are trapped on either side of the borders with neighbouring countries.

A lasting political solution in Afghanistan will require the establishment of a regime that is representative of all the Afghan people of various ethnic backgrounds. Given recent events, such an approach could revive hope in a country that has been devastated by conflict for many years. The commitment of the United Nations to that process will be necessary, especially in the transition and reconstruction phase. It is essential to emphasize that the participation of the Afghans themselves in this process will be decisive; the international community's role is to help them to implement their own decisions. Mr. Brahimi was right to tell the media that it was time for the Afghans to understand that today — perhaps for the first time — they have an opportunity that absolutely must not be wasted.

The joint declaration issued by the meeting of the "six plus two" group that was chaired by the Secretary-General, with the participation of Mr. Brahimi, has strengthened our belief with regard to the best approach to adopt in dealing with the problems of Afghanistan. It is very important at this stage for the "six plus two" group to act in a united and coordinated way and, above all, on an urgent basis, so as to guarantee peace and security for the country and the entire subregion.

Despite Afghanistan's slide into chaos in recent years, and the dangerous and destabilizing implications that that has had for the subregion and elsewhere, the international community still has an essential moral duty not to condemn the entire Afghan people for the mistakes of an authority that has been isolated within the country and has made enemies of much of the rest of the world by turning that country into a base camp for an international terrorist network. It is a matter of urgency to help the Afghan people to take charge and forge their own destiny.

The approaches, measures and arrangements that Ambassador Brahimi has just suggested to the Council can serve as a starting point for a peace process. We must pay very close attention to those proposals. We encourage Ambassador Brahimi in his task of serving as an informed messenger of the international community.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We, too, are grateful to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ambassador Brahimi, for participating in today's meeting. This meeting is very timely. We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for having convened it.

The counter-terrorist operation by the international coalition and the major military successes of the United Front, which in recent days has succeeded in liberating from the Taliban a significant portion of Afghan territory, including Kabul and other towns, give particular relevance — even urgency — to defining the international community's task of providing assistance to the Afghan people for post-conflict peace-building, in particular for the political reconstruction of their country.

Of course, it is, without a doubt, up to the Afghans themselves to find a solution.

However, it is clear that, without the active assistance of the international community, the Afghans alone will find it difficult to deal with these tasks. It is necessary to resolve these issues effectively, not only for the Afghan people but for the entire international community. Otherwise, it will be impossible to neutralize the threats emanating from Afghanistan — terrorism, the drug trade and other threats that affect the interests of the whole of humankind.

We are convinced that the United Nations should play the central role in facilitating the transformation of Afghanistan into a normal, stable and prosperous state — not only because averting the threat to regional and international security emanating from Taliban-controlled territory falls squarely within the purview of the Security Council and the General Assembly, but also because we believe that only within the context of the United Nations can we find practical solutions that

would be acceptable to all parties to the peace process, thereby ensuring the parties' cooperation in their implementation.

What is our view of the principles of the future political dispensation in Afghanistan?

First of all, it must be a peaceful and truly independent state, one that has friendly relations with its neighbours and with the international community as a whole. Its government should not be pro-anyone — only pro-Afghan. It is essential that in future that country not pose any threat to regional and international security.

Secondly, given historical realities in Afghanistan, it is clear that the viability of its future political system will depend directly on whether the new government is broadly representative and multi-ethnic in nature. It is important that, in the new political system, no one ethnic group should have dominance over any other. It is essential to work out acceptable forms of partnership among the Afghans, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. Only on that basis will it be possible to ensure a stable political regime.

Thirdly, the Taliban movement, which has discredited itself because of its support for international terrorism, can have no place in the power structures in Afghanistan. Unless this criminal movement, which has no popular support, is eliminated, we cannot hope to see the definitive eradication of terrorism in Afghanistan.

Here we must draw a clear distinction between the Taliban on the one hand and the Pashtuns and the traditional Afghan clergy on the other, most of whom do not share the radical views of the Taliban.

Clearly, the time has come to give serious thought to the convening, under the auspices of the United Nations, of an international conference on Afghanistan, which would act as a guarantor of post-conflict state-building in the country and would elaborate a broad programme for the economic recovery of the country.

We believe that the "six plus two" group is an important forum, in whose context we can find an effective balance between the interests of the various parties concerned. We deem to be an absolute sine qua non the fact that work in that group should be based on close partnership and on the search for options for a post-conflict political system in Afghanistan that would be agreeable to the international community as a whole, and to the countries of the region in particular.

We attach great importance to yesterday's meeting of that group, with the participation of Foreign Ministers, at which a thorough exchange of views took place as to the tasks facing the international community in the process of helping the Afghan people building a new life for themselves. The joint declaration that was adopted following that meeting gives an accurate and substantive assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and of ways to redress that situation.

We deem it important that the Ministers condemned the Taliban's ties with international terrorism and supported the efforts of the Afghan people to rid themselves of that regime. However, our understanding is that the task of facilitating the search for ways to resolve the Afghan crisis is not the sole prerogative of the "six plus two" group. It is very important here to involve other countries in resolving these issues through the flexible use of the available mechanisms.

We would welcome in particular the revitalization of the work of the Group of 21. We also believe that, as the task of post-conflict rehabilitation in Afghanistan becomes more urgent, the role and responsibility of the Afghanistan support group will grow. We are prepared to engage in a constructive consideration of proposals on how to improve the work of the "six plus two" group itself.

We have received information that currently, in Kunduz province, in the northeastern part of Afghanistan, a large military group of Taliban is now fully surrounded. That group consists of about 10,000 people, including members of international terrorist organizations and foreign mercenaries. The rank-and-file members of the Taliban movement may benefit from the amnesty proclaimed by the United Front if they voluntarily hand over their weapons. With regard to non-Afghans, we believe that, if they surrender, the United Front leadership will also treat them with clemency and spare their lives. Thus their subsequent fate could be determined by judicial means, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1333 (2000), 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001).

We call on all States Members of the United Nations with influence on the Taliban and on the foreigners who are fighting on their side to exert the

necessary pressure on them in order to put an end to their resistance and to any further bloodshed.

Like our colleagues, we believe that the immediate priority is to step up humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. Russia will continue effectively to coordinate its large-scale efforts in this area with international efforts, primarily through the United Nations. But at the same time, we must start planning, in the context of the United Nations, for a long-term strategy for international assistance in the rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan, as a reinforcement of the political efforts to resolve the Afghan conflict.

In conclusion, I should like once again to stress the importance that we attach to the efforts of the Secretary-General and of Ambassador Brahimi, and we reaffirm our willingness to work very closely with the Special Representative on the whole range of problems facing Afghanistan. The ideas and assessments that we heard today from Ambassador Brahimi will doubtless be taken into consideration in the work of the Security Council on the new resolution on Afghanistan.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for their very informative briefing on the situation in Afghanistan, at a time when the situation in the territory clearly demands the attention of the international community.

We all have been following the developments carefully in recent weeks, during which time dramatic events have taken place. The situation that has emerged has very significant dimensions in relation to its military, political and humanitarian aspects.

With regard to the military situation, we note this morning's reports of the changing situation on the ground and the withdrawal of the Taliban from Kabul. This change in the control of the capital must not result in further atrocities. It should be the start of a process leading to peace and national reconciliation. The fight for territory must be replaced by the promotion of stability and an effort to accurately and clearly reflect the will of the Afghan people in any new political arrangement.

Jamaica remains committed to the search for a lasting and comprehensive solution to the crisis in the territory. We support the creation of a broad-based, representative government for a democratic and stable leadership of Afghanistan. It is important that work be undertaken towards establishing political arrangements that are broadly acceptable to the people of Afghanistan.

We agree that the United Nations has an important role to play to assist in this process. It is in this context that we welcome the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Brahimi, the important talks he has already engaged in with key officials in the region and the framework for action that he has presented to the Council today.

With winter approaching, greater urgency is now attached to the critical humanitarian situation. Jamaica commends the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations for their contributions to alleviating the suffering of the people of Afghanistan. We also commend the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and other agencies over the last few weeks for their efforts to get supplies into Afghanistan for their innovative efforts to find alternate routes for the delivery of food, and for their targeting of regions where the need is greatest.

The humanitarian situation will be greatly assisted by an overall political solution. There has to be a stable environment in which humanitarian agencies can function effectively and have unhindered access to those in greatest need. We wish to reiterate that the safety and security of United Nations personnel, including all humanitarian workers, should be guaranteed both inside Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries.

The influx of refugees into neighbouring countries and their dismal conditions in refugee camps also require our immediate attention. We support the opening of borders in neighbouring countries for the provision of assistance to those countries to enable them to deal with this crisis. Special attention must be paid to the situation of Afghan women and girls, who have been denied access to health, education and basic civil rights. We agree with Ambassador Brahimi that the transition process must involve the participation of

individuals and groups, including women, who have previously been excluded.

In closing, Jamaica would like to stress that the political and humanitarian objectives for Afghanistan can be accomplished only with the assistance and cooperation of neighbouring countries and the wider international community. It is in that context that we welcome the meeting yesterday of the "six plus two" group and its expressed commitment to supporting the efforts of the Afghan people in the search for a political solution. We also attach importance to the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Brahimi, as his efforts will be instrumental for the establishment of political arrangements to stabilize the situation. This is the challenge that now confronts us.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list. In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.30 this afternoon.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m.